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REGIONAL APPLICATION OF A NUTRIENT BALANCE SHEET IN ITALY

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Several agronomic and environmental reasons show the importance to define and use technical tools able to optimize fertilization management.

A rational fertilizer use on herbaceous crops not only satisfies crop nutritional needs, but in the meantime it permits:

- to save money spent in mineral fertilizers
- to promote the technical enhancement of farmers
- to adapt farm management to laws ruling the use of animal wastes
- to reduce nutrients losses in the environment.

In order to apply the best agronomic practices and, in the meantime, in order to respect the environmental legislation limiting an excessive use of animal wastes and mineral fertilizer in agriculture, fertilization can be ruled through the application of a nutrient balance sheet.

A nutrient balance sheet is a document aimed to produce an improvement of technical skills at the farm level, to reduce the environmental impact of animal breeding at a regional level, to apply legislation that protects the environment. Moreover, when organized on the same base for several farms, a nutrient balance sheet produces a valuable data collection useful to further improve regional management of agriculture and environment. A nutrient balance sheet is often used to apply the best agronomic practices to fertilization management, as it represents the most appropriate and user-friendly technical tool for agricultural operators to optimise the efficiency of fertilizers.

The Piedmont region in Northern Italy has developed a balance sheet and an application software useful to implement it in the local farming. The evolution of this balance sheet and the problems related to its application are here discussed.